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NEWS RELEASE

June 26, 2006

Contact: Kraig Paulson, UM defensive coordinator, 406-243-5291 or 406-549-0861.

UM COACHES, GRADUATED GRIZ TO PLAY FOOTBALL IN JAPAN

MISSOULA —

Twice in his life Kraig Paulson has found an unlikely ticket to Japan -- American-style football.

Paulson, defensive coordinator for The University of Montana Grizzlies, first visited Japan in 1984 to play in the Mirage Bowl as a Griz fullback. It was the only time the **Plentywood** native ever traveled globally.

Now football has called Paulson back to the Land of the Rising Sun as a coach. He and UM offensive coordinator Rob Phenicie are taking six recently graduated Griz players to play in the New Era Bowl on Saturday, July 8.

Paulson said the New Era Bowl is a cultural exchange in which U.S. coaches and a group of their players spend a week in Japan preparing a team of Japanese coaches and college athletes for the big game. UM will help coach the White Stars this year, and a squad from the University of Washington will help coach the opposing Blue Stars.

Former Griz players who will take to the turf in Japan are offensive lineman Jason Frink, inside linebacker Shane MacIntyre, defensive end Lance Spencer, wide receiver Jon Talmage, free safety Tyler Thomas and running back JR Waller.

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Paulson said the Griz and the White Stars will practice in Osaka, while UW and the Blue Stars work out in nearby Kobe.

"This is a tremendous opportunity," he said. "It's going to be fun to see how strong football is over there. And we have six kids who have graduated who are excited about playing another game."

The trip won't stress the UM athletic budget, since it is completely funded by the New Era Bowl Executive Committee in Japan. Coaches also get to bring their wives, who will be provided with tours and other activities during the week of practice.

"We're ecstatic," said Paulson's wife, Jody. "This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Coach Paulson said UM connections with UW led to the invitation to participate in the New Era Bowl. UW defensive coordinator Kent Baer has helped coordinate and coach the cultural exchange game for more than 15 years, and Dominic Daste, Montana's offensive line coach and a four-year letterman for UW, is good friends with Kyle Benn, UW's graduate assistant coach. Daste was asked to coach in Japan but had a previous commitment, so he passed the opportunity on to his fellow Montana coaches.

According to the New Era Bowl Web site, the White Stars won 23-14 in 2002. The Blue Stars won 20-19 in 2003, and in 2004 the game was called because of thunderstorms. Last year the White Stars prevailed 21-10.

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CBS

Local, dailies, Plentywood Herald

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